**Socratic Seminar: The Philosopher-King**

**Nomen: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Datum: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Seminar Overview:**

This Socratic Seminar will be concerned with the question of law and rule. You will discussing a famous and controversial portion of Plato’s dialogues, which grapples with the idea of power and rule: what sort of individual, or even government, is best to rule mankind?

**Seminar Question:**

The seminal question to frame your argument for this seminar is:

* *Plato believes that a wise-man “philosopher-king” should rule in human society, who has the specific skills necessary for rule, and that laws are less important than the individual ruler himself. Assess the validity of this statement, particularly in modern circumstances.*

When you arrive to class on Friday, your notes, annotations, citations, and material evidence should be prepared around making a *specific, concrete* argument answering that question.

**Secondary Questions:**

The following are secondary questions that may come up during the seminar, and which you should think about:

1. Does anyone deserve the right to rule, or are only some allowed?
2. Is a ‘just ruler’ better than the law?
3. How can democracy be destructive to good and orderly rule?
4. The ability to make decisions is the ‘science’ or ‘skill’ of the philosopher-king. Do you believe this is really a skill?
5. Plato’s argument turns on the value of an ‘informed and knowledgeable opinion’ is greater than the opinion of the masses. Do you agree?

**Resources**

You should take your citations and evidence predominately from the selection of *The Statesman* from the Dialogues of Plato. However, if you would like to bring outside evidence, please consult with me briefly before doing so.

**Expectations**

1. Everyone should be participating. This is a discussion, not a lecture.
2. You *should try to always* use evidence when supporting your arguments.
3. You should be listening respectfully, and paying attention. Do so by *using good body language and eye contact.*
4. Please allow a speaker to finish their thought or question before responding. Do not cut people off to make your own point or ask your own question.
5. Be considerate and open-minded. **The purpose of a Socratic Seminar is not to win an argument. The point is to further your understanding of a topic. The only way to do so is to keep an open mind and fully listen to what others have to say.**
6. Ensure that everyone has had a chance to speak, or has been encouraged to speak. Please consider others if you have been talking a fair amount of the time, and yield to someone who looks like they’ve been waiting patiently. **It is just as important to hear multiple viewpoints from others, as it is to make your own point. This is the only way to test and strengthen your argument.**

**The following below are things to keep in mind:**

* This will be a tough seminar without clarifying such terms as “philosopher”, “wise-man”, “king”, and “skills for ruling”. Please be ready to explain those terms in your own words during the seminar itself.
* If you wish to argue in favor of a type of government that is not within the group of examples discussed in class, bring your own material evidence to quote from.
* Be ready to quote evidence by writing down page numbers, specific quotes, paraphrased information, *etc.* You don’t want to spend your speaking time shuffling through pages and forgetting where a key piece of evidence lies hidden.

**Rubric**

Below are the criteria for scoring in this Socratic Seminar:

*There is a total of 25 points to be earned during the seminar. Socratic Seminars will be scored under the “Tests” category, so these points will be valuable.*

1. Participation: you can earn up to **5 points** for participation:

a. 3 points minimum for speaking at least once,

b. 4 points for contributing at least twice,

c. 5 points for contributing at least thrice.

2. Evidence: you can earn up to **5 points** for evidence use:

a. 3 points minimum for using quoted evidence at least once,

b. 4 points for using quoted evidence twice,

c. 5 points for using quoted evidence at least thrice.

3. Preparation: you can earn up to **5 points** for preparation for the seminar:

a. 3 points minimum for bringing the reading

b. 4 points for bringing the reading with annotations and citations.

c. 5 points for bringing the annotated and cited reading, along with a prepared sheet that has your notes on your argument, your questions, and other preparations.

4. Conduct: you can earn up to **10 points** for conduct during the seminar:

a. minimum 5 points for being respectful to all students.

b. 7 points for being respectful for the whole seminar, and for making good eye contact to all speakers.

c. 8 points for being respectful, making eye contact, letting others have their turn to speak, and speaking in a polite, calm, and respectful manner.

d. 9-10 points for all of the above, plus actively encouraging other students to speak and share their opinions.